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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/W, INR/AA (BGRAVES)

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TAGS: PGOV KDEM PINR KDEM SL
SUBJECT: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON SIERRA LEONEAN PRESIDENTIAL AND VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

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¶11. (U) The National Electoral Commission has announced that seven political parties are registered to participate in the presidential election on August 11. The following is biographic information on the presidential and vice presidential candidates from the three main political parties, the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), All People's Congress (APC), and the People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC).

SLPP PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE SOLOMON BERERA

¶12. (SBU) The ruling SLPP has nominated current Vice President Solomon Ekuma Dominic Berera as its presidential candidate. Nicknamed "Solo B," Berera has been Vice President since 2002 and also serves as the party leader for the SLPP. He enjoys considerable party support, and many party members anticipate that Berera will maintain continuity. However, party leaders have commented that there may be a major reshuffle of ministerial positions.

¶13. (U) Prior to becoming Vice President, Berera served as the country's Attorney General and Minister of Justice from 1996 to 1997 and again from 1998 to May 2002. Approximately 77 years old, Berera is Mende and was born in Bo District in the Southern Province. He received his B.A. from Fourah Bay College and later obtained a degree in Cooperative Studies and Accounting at Loughborough Cooperative College in England. He also holds a Certificate in Agricultural Marketing from University of New Castle. Before his career as a civil servant, Berera was an attorney with the law firm Betts and Berera.

¶14. (U) Berera is viewed suspiciously by political opponents and has been described as vindictive and a trickster by people who have had dealings with him when he practiced law. Selected by President Kabbah to be his successor, some SLPP party stalwarts initially felt Berera was not the best candidate and had come out of relatively obscurity to earn the presidential nomination. Berera is trying to distinguish himself beyond the shadow cast by President Kabbah. The public's view of Berera is mixed. There are camps that view him as President Kabbah's puppet, while others support him fully.

¶15. (SBU) Recent political miscues by President Kabbah have led Berera to distance himself from the outgoing President. Negative public backlash from the recent visits of former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo and Libyan President Muammar Qadhafi were thought to have hurt the SLPP's election chances. However, it appears that Berera has recovered from these missteps and continues ardently campaigning. Berera is a widower and has five children, three of whom live in Atlanta. His late wife, Deborah, passed away while on a visit to the United States in December 2005. Berera is a devout Catholic, who was the organist at his church, and has a son who is a priest in Kenema in the Eastern Province.

SLPP VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE MOMODU KOROMA

¶16. (U) The SLPP vice presidential candidate is Alhaji Momodu Koroma. He is the current Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. Koroma was born in Bo in 1956 and is Temne, one of the predominant tribes in the Northern Province. His parents hail from Yonibana chiefdom in the Tonkololi District in the Northern Province, however, he has never lived in the North. Koroma received his B.S. degree in Physics from Njala University followed by a diploma in Applied Meteorology at the University of Nairobi. Koroma also received a certificate in Applied Statistics and his Master's degree in Meteorology from the University of Reading in England, where he also obtained a Certificate in Computer Applications from the Institute of Public Administration and Management.

¶17. (SBU) Before his appointment as Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2002, he served as Minister of Presidential Affairs from 1996 TO ¶2002. In this position, he advised the President on governance and public sector reform, political parties, security sector reform, legal and judicial reform, conflict resolution and management, national capacity building, parastatals, and donor relations. He has also served as a member in the Organizing Committee of the SLPP National Convention and was Secretary of the Presidential Campaign Committee in 2002. Koroma is the current chairman of the African Union Foreign Ministers Committee for United Nations Reform.

¶18. (SBU) It is widely felt that Koroma was forced on Berewa by President Kabbah due to Berewa's advanced age. Others speculate that Kabbah wants someone in office who he feels is loyal to him. Many SLPP party stalwarts, who feel Koroma's candidacy could potentially hurt the SLPP's elections hopes, supported selecting Kanja Sesay, Head of the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA), as Berewa's running mate. Koroma has been a regular on the campaign

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trail with Vice President Berewa, but mostly has been delegated a minor role in the SLPP campaign. Momodu Koroma is a Muslim and is married with five children. Two of his children reside in Atlanta.

APC PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE ERNEST KOROMA

¶19. (U) APC presidential candidate Ernest Bai Koroma was born in Northern Bombali District in Makeni in 1953. During the last Parliament, he served as the minority leader. Koroma was voted Leader of the APC in March 2002 until he was stripped of the position by the Supreme Court of Sierra Leone in June 2005. He was later reinstated as Party Leader in September of that same year. Ernest Koroma also ran as the APC presidential candidate in the 2002 elections, but only managed to secure 22 percent of the vote.

¶10. (U) Koroma earned his B.A. degree from Fourah Bay College in 1978 studying History, Philosophy and Law. Following graduation, he taught secondary school for a short time before going into the insurance business, where he became Managing Director of Reliance Insurance Trust Corporation (Ritcorp), a fellow of the West African Insurance Institute, and an Associate of the Institute of Risk Management and the Institute of Directors in the UK.

¶11. (U) Koroma is trying to shape his candidacy as the new face of the APC to overcome the stigma associated with the APC stemming from years of abusive rule during the Siaka Steven's era. Koroma is Christian, married, and has two children.

APC VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE SAMUEL SAM-SUMANA

¶12. (U) Samuel Sam-Sumana, the APC vice presidential candidate, was born in the Kono District to late Paramount Chief Sam-Sumana. He currently is CEO of Aries Rehabilitation Construction and Supplies (ARCS) Ltd. Sam-Sumana received a B.S. degree in Management Information Systems from the University of Minnesota and holds a diploma in Diamond Rough Grading, Sorting, and Polishing from the American Institute of Diamond Cutting and Polishing in Florida. He also has a degree in Computer Networking from Knollwood Computer and

Business School in Minnesota.

¶13. (U) While in the U.S., he was the Systems Officer for Prudential Financial Group, Allina Health Services, and Seagate Technologies. Sam-Sumana has served as Managing Director of the United Diamond Mining Company in Kono and acted as Regional Manager for C-12 International, a Texas-based company engaged in diamond buying in Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia. During the civil war, Sam-Sumana was Vice-Chairman of the Kono-Union Chapter in Minnesota and frequently visited Kono to initiate construction and road repair projects to increase accessibility within eastern Sierra Leone. He is a longstanding a member of the "Five-Man Committee," a committee comprised of the top members of the APC leadership.

¶14. (SBU) Waiting until after the SLPP had announced Momodu Koroma as its vice presidential candidate, the APC chose Sam-Sumana in an attempt to solidify support in the Kono District in hope of strengthening its polling numbers in the SLPP-dominated Eastern Province. However, it is thought that Sam-Sumana may actually hurt the APC due to allegations of unscrupulous business practices in the diamond sector. Although Sam-Sumana may help the APC in Kono, his appeal elsewhere appears minimal. Sam-Sumana is a Muslim and is married with three children.

PMDC PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE CHARLES MARGAI

¶15. (U) PMDC presidential candidate Charles Francis Kondo Margai was born in Bonthe District in 1945. Margai is the nephew and son of Sierra Leone's first two prime ministers. His uncle, Milton Margai, served as Sierra Leone's first Prime Minister following independence in 1961 and was followed by his father, Albert Margai, who was Prime Minister from 1964-1967.

¶16. (U) A longtime SLPP party stalwart, Margai bolted the SLPP and formed the PMDC in January 2006 after he did not win the SLPP nomination for president. Margai is extremely bitter that he did not receive the SLPP presidential nomination and feels betrayed by the SLPP leadership. He is selling the PMDC as an alternative to the SLPP by using a political platform of "positive change." He has been able to capture some of the youth vote with a promise of transforming the government, but his popularity appears to be waning.

¶17. (U) Margai received his B.A. in Civil Law from University College of Dublin, Ireland and has practiced law since 1971. In 1977, Margai became a member of Parliament representing the Moyamba South II constituency. He was the regional chairman of the SLPP, Southern Region from 1992-1995, and served as Minister of Internal

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Affairs in President Kabbah's administration from 1998-2002. He also was President of the Sierra Leone Bar Association in 2004. He currently is lead counsel for the Defense Team in the Special Court for Sierra Leone trial of Civil Defense Force (CDF) indictee Alie Kondowa. Margai is Catholic and married with two daughters.

PMDC VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IBRAHIM TEJAN-JALLOH

¶18. (U) The PMDC vice presidential candidate is Dr. Ibrahim Tejan-Jalloh. Tejan-Jalloh is a Fullah from the Northern Province. He is approximately 70 years old and the grandson of a former Paramount Chief in the Koinadugu District in the Northern Province. He attended Norwood Technical College in London, the University of Heidelberg, the University of Berlin, the University of Hamburg, and the University of London. He received his M.D. from the University of Berlin and practiced out-patient medicine at the Connaught Hospital in Freetown. He also served as the Medical Officer-in-charge of the Koinadugu District and was appointed Senior Medical Superintendent in the Department of Health. Dr. Tejan-Jalloh is a World Health Organization (WHO) Fellow and has published many articles on health issues in Africa. Dr. Tejan-Jalloh served as Minister of Health and Sanitation for the SLPP Government from 1999-2002.

¶19. (U) The PMDC selected Tejan-Jalloh to attract support in the APC-dominated Northern Province from Fullah tribe members. The Fullah form a large part of the business community in the North, and several hold influential positions in President Kabbah's SLPP Government. Dr. Tejan-Jalloh is a Muslim and married with three children. He also is a brother of the current Sierra Leonean Ambassador to the United States, Sulaiman Tejan-Jalloh.

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